32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

By the time the settlers moved in, the antelope had disappeared from the Comanche country, as well as the deer and turkey. As early as we arrived, I never saw a turkey. Some of the small black bear held out in the Wichita mountains for a few years. But there was no possible chance for the Indian to live on large game.

Ducks, geese, plover, curlew, snipe, bobwhite, and prairie chickens were plentiful, and West Cache Creek was teeming with channel cat, blue and yellow cat, and perch; yet I never saw an Indian hunting birds or dangling a hook in the water.

Fish-eating, I was to learn later, was almost taboo. Wallace and Hoebel, doing research for their Comanche history, gained the impression that the Comanches ate fish only to keep from actually starving. They had no objection to white people's fishing in their streams. I fished for miles up and down West Cache Creek, and no one ever objected.

I have often thought if I owned a farm West Cache ran through, I would charge people just to look at the creek. To the eye of a boy, there was nothing so beautiful as the blue-green water running over the slightly reddish-tinted granite sand. There was no quicksand on West Cache. Its sand was so sharp you scarcely sank in it when you walked, nor did you rile the water. Here and there were small beaches of clean sand where the swimmer could enter and leave the water. This cool, clear water came from the Wichita Mountains. Strong, vigorous elms along the high banks furnished shade for the swimmer or fisherman. More than sixty years later, I still feel it was the most beautiful prairie stream I have ever seen.

Too young in those days to realize the cause, I couldn't help but sense the terrible separateness between my Carlisle group and the older men and women. Later I was to realize that government educators of the late nineteenth century, in carrying out their theory of educating young Indians, violated the unwritten bedrock commandment of human behavior: "Thou shalt not speak ill of any man in the presence of his offspring." You must not cut away the support from beneath his feet. You may be able to furnish him another platform, on which he may see fit to step; but he can never step onto your platform if you have first destroyed his footing.

Even the Comanche children's language became taboo at Carlisle. After drilling into the children's minds what terrible people their par-